UNITED NATIONS

World Chronicle

PROGRAMME: No. 674, recorded 10 September 1997

GUEST: **Bernard Miyet**
United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations

JOURNALISTS: Ian Williams, *Tribune* (London)
Anne Penketh, Agence France-Presse

MODERATOR: Michael Littlejohns

UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS

Today, there are 15 United Nations peace-keeping operations in different parts of the world. Over the last few years, the UN has been criticized for the shortcomings of a number of its peace-keeping operations, notably in Somalia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bernard Miyet, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations, discusses issues related to the politics of peace-keeping. He describes the role of the Member States and the Security Council in the creation of peace-keeping operations and maintains that the United Nations is always ready to dispatch peace-keepers upon the approval of the Security Council. Sixty-nine countries have signed a stand-by agreement with the United Nations to provide troops for future peace-keeping missions.

WORLD CHRONICLE is produced by the Media Division, Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York, NY 10017, U.S.A.

Duration: 28:01"
Executive Producer: Kamil Taha
Director: Livingston Hinckley
Production Assistant: Ellen McGuffie

ANNOUNCER: From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is **World Chronicle**, an unedited interview programme about major global issues. Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns, and this is **World Chronicle**.

Since 1948, the United Nations has pioneered and developed peace-keeping as one means to maintain international peace and security. Today there are 15 peace-keeping operations in different parts of the world supervising peace agreements, monitoring cease-fires and patrolling demilitarized zones. Many peace-keepers have lost their lives while serving under the banner of the world organization. Where are these peace-keeping operations, and have they succeeded in keeping the peace? Has the role of the peace-keeper changed over the years, especially since the end of the cold war?

Our guest today oversees all United Nations peace-keeping efforts. He is Bernard Miyet, Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations. Joining me to talk with Mr. Miyet are Ian Williams of the *Tribune* of London and Anne Penketh of AFP.

Mr. Miyet, welcome to World Chronicle. Ambassador Miyet, what would your answer be to the question we've just asked in the introduction: Has the United Nations done a good job in the area of peace-keeping, would you say, from your perspective? And what is the future of peace-keeping?

MIYET: So, I have been in the job only for six months, so I can speak about this period, but also, as a former ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, dealing mostly with humanitarian and human rights affairs, I have some advice and ideas on the question. I would say that the United Nations has been requested to do a lot in a very short period of time, difficult situations after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and countries have expected maybe at some point too much from the Organization. But the Organization has been able, I think, to cope with the most difficult situations. It's true that we had experience in Somalia, in Bosnia -- big difficulties, sometimes big losses of human life, as far as we were concerned. These were heavy operations in a very, very new context for peace-keepers, which was countries without any states, with parties fighting each other in a context of warfare which was totally new for the Organization. It has been done with an organization which didn't have at the time the real means in terms of bureaucracy, in terms of expertise to do that, and I must say that they did a good job. I have to thank my predecessors Marrack Goulding and the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, about what they have achieved in a few years to try to build a department and peace-keeping experience within this Organization.

LITTLEJOHNS: What would you say is currently the most difficult peace-keeping operation that the UN is involved in?

MIYET: I would say that there are difficult situations in different parts of the world. You can say that now we have to try to achieve what has been your action in eastern Slavonia, Croatia. It has been very daunting and challenging work to be done there, with full authority by the UN, 6,000 troops, to try to run a region which has to be reincorporated within Croatia. We are on the right track, we still face difficulties, and we hope to achieve that within a few months, before the beginning of next year. We have Angola, where, after the situation which has developed in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the former Zaire, or now, in neighbouring countries, we have a situations where we have to try to preserve peace where temptations are great at this time to resume war by the parties. We have Haiti, where also we have been represented for years in a situations where there is a real political crisis, without solutions in view for the time being. Here, too, we have to try to confront these situations in a most difficult situation. There still is the former Yugoslavia, also. We are present, we have 2200 policemen, civil policemen, in Bosnia, where we have a tough road, a difficult road, at this period of time, where you know that there are difficulties to implement the political part of the peace agreement. So we have many places where we have to face different challenges in complex situations, and we've clear willingness on the part of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to try to face and to respond to these challenges.

LITTLEJOHNS: These policemen that you mentioned, they're in a very dangerous situation. I understand they're not even armed.

MIYET: They are not armed.

LITTLEJOHNS: How can they protect themselves?

MIYET: In the case of Bosnia, because we are speaking about Bosnia, they are unarmed, but at the same time we have always had a very assertive role, and there is the protection of the S-FOR, the NATO-led force still present on the ground, which can react on the request if our policemen think that their action is necessary. So we can rely on the NATO S-FOR forces if there is a reason. But at the same time, unarmed. We have developed what we call a check point policy in which these unarmed policemen, only two of them, are chasing illegal chase points, organized, and set up by the parties. And it's successful at this point. We are trying to investigate in police stations if the policemen of both sides, federations and Republic of Srpska, where there are many difficulties, are detaining or not illegal weapons, if human rights are respected by the policemen of both parties. So it's a very active, even pro-active role. We rely on our support from S-FOR, but we try to do our best in this context.

WILLIAMS: Well, you mentioned Bosnia, of course, and UNPROFOR was possibly the least glorious episode in UN peace-keeping. There were even accusations that the UNPROFOR, the UN force there was an accomplice to genocide because of the way it was hamstrung by mandates. But one of the neighbouring peace-keeping operations, which is

usually overlooked, is UNPREDEP, which is the one on the border of Macedonia and Serbia, and this is one of the most successful ever operations. It's averted something happening, instead of troops coming into an already bad situation, when things had already happened and it was difficult to control. Do you anticipate in future that there will be more pre-emptive operations, that peace-keepers will be there while there is still a peace to keep and not when the peace has flown through the bomb crater?

MIYET: So, as you know, it's up to the members of the Security Council to decide. And when you refer to these two examples, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on one side and Bosnia and Herzegovina on the other side, you just realize that this has been the story of solidarity, cohesion and coherence by the Member States of the Security Council on one side to have a real forceful action in the other side; a story of missed opportunities, division, some kind of lack of cohesion among the members of the Security Council on what are the objectives, what are means to meet the objectives, and what is the capacity given to the United Nations to carry out their tasks. So here we know at this point what are our weaknesses, what are the capacities, the capabilities of the organization, and we will, and the Secretary-General, in person, because he is the most aware of everyone of what is peace-keeping, what has been the experience of the last year, what we can do, with realism, but at the same time with really the will to be active when it's necessary. We won't propose, I would say, actions or initiatives which would be irresponsible, but as far as we can provide something for peace and for security, we will do it, and we will present all our project demands to the Security Council.

WILLIAMS: So you or you as your department consider it your responsibility to go trouble-shooting, to identify situations that might be about to erupt, and recommend to the Security Council that an operation there might prevent a new Bosnia or a new Somalia.

MIYET: If we think that it's necessary, we might come and the Secretariat would come to say here you have to be aware, try to be cautious, try to see if there is. It's in the role of the UN, the United Nations, to also have a preventive action when it's necessary. Most of the time we are depending on what are the reactions of the Member States, of the media, because your role in the awareness, public awareness, and the situations and the need to intervene is sometimes a most important tool, instrument, in order, but public opinion first, and governments sometime after that, react and believe it necessary to intervene. We do it on our part; very often the support of the media is important to do that. But at the same time, on certain occasions there is no media interest for certain situations, and it's very difficult for the Secretariat itself to try to push, to press ahead in order to be more active.

PENKETH: The latest case in point is probably the conflict in Congo-Brazzaville. The Secretary-General recommended several months ago to the Security Council sending in

some kind of force, whether it be a multinational force or a UN force. Now there are still no troops of any kind, any international force which has been sent. It seems that the Security Council doesn't have the stomach any more to send troops into conflict situations to keep the peace. Is this a problem for you?

MIYET: I come back to your last words, which were "in conflict situations." This I think has been the lessons of all the experience of the last months and years, and it's clear that there is reluctance today by the troop-contributing countries, by the Security Council, by the Secretariat itself, to say that we will send troops without a real perspective, with real risks in terms of human lives of our soldiers, without a clear commitment at least of the parties to accept the force and to play a useful and positive political role in terms of negotiation. And as far as you were discussing about the Republic of Congo, on the 20th of June, on the 21st of June the Secretary-General wrote a letter to the Security Council members and went in person to the Security Council on a Saturday afternoon to make his proposition. We have said from the beginning that it would be useful to plan, and we are prepared in a real sense, technically, peace-keeping operations, but with three conditions. And these are the lessons of the experience. And as soon as these three conditions seem to be implemented, the Secretariat will take its responsibility and come back to the Security Council. These conditions were: a holding cease-fire; were the neutralizations and control of the international airport in order to have clear handling of what is the situation, avoiding weapons to flow into the country; and the third one, a commitment by the parties to try to find political solutions to their problems. For the time being the cease-fire has been holding, sometimes yes, sometimes not, but the situation remains still unstable. On the second point there was an agreement to say yes, we might transfer responsibility of the airport to UN troops, to Blue Helmets in order to have these neutralizations. On the third point, which is the commitment, for the time being discussions are still going on, and the parties have not accepted the idea that they might go on. We do not ask for a complete, very detailed plan already agreed, but at least a clear commitment and a clear perspective in political terms.

LITTLEJOHNS: This is **World Chronicle**. Our guest is Bernard Miyet, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations. Anne?

PENKETH: So the Secretariat rejects the argument, then, that peace-keepers actually could serve as a deterrent and should be sent in even before a cease-fire takes place?

MIYET: It has been discussed -- you know, that's a chicken and egg, to say if you send troops you won't have resumption of the war. If the parties themselves, and we know that sometimes militias are not under real control by the parties, if you send peace-keepers without a clear perspective, without the consent of the bodies, without that commitment to ensure their security, and to go with a clear political perspective, we know that these propositions, which

might be in appearance easy, won't fly at the Security Council. We are realistic, we are responsible. We will come forcefully when we believe that everyone is ready -- Security Council; but we will be active [?], but also the parties have to be responsible, and take their responsibility.

WILLIAMS: Well, following off of Anne's question, that begs the question, when there is no peace to keep, if you have one party that's being clearly aggressive, ignores cease-fires, in effect you're saying we are going to respect those as equal parties. In the case of Bosnia, you now have a group which was led by people now arraigned as war criminals which was being treated as just one of the two warring parties -- at the time. So you have this moral equivalence which developed because the UN forces went in with that precise idea, that there was a peace to keep, that they were somehow referees. And you had the obscenity of UN monitors checking how many shells were going into an unarmed civilian city, ticking them off as they went, without intervening.

MIYET: Clearly, on Bosnia, it was not a peace to keep, because there was no peace agreement. The peace agreement has been negotiated in Dayton, and signed in Paris. Before that there was no agreement on peace. So there was at the beginning a humanitarian action in Bosnia. And so we were in the context of a mandate, terms of reference given by the Security Council, which were different. Today we are in a real peace-keeping situation with a peace agreement, and with different organizations trying to implement it -- as for on the military side, the UN, OSCE, the Council of Europe, under the authority of the higher representatives on the civilian side. So it's a different perspective --

WILLIAMS: No, but what we're talking about I think is has the peace-keeping department in the UN learned the lessons from this? You don't send troops in as referees when one of the sides is clearly going to play foul from the beginning, unless the referee has some authority. And we have situations where peace-keepers can be tied on bridges, where they can be shelled in Lebanon seemingly with impunity --

MIYET: Yes.

WILLIAMS: -- and no action is taken.

MIYET: It depends. We come back to Lebanon, we come back.... We have the capacity, whatever the situation, to react when our soldiers are threatened. These are the rules of engagement. Whatever --

LITTLEJOHNS: Only firing in self defence?

MIYET: Only firing in self defence, but it can be more, if it's Chapter VII, but, the lessons of the last period of time I would say, but when there is, I would say not Chapter VII, but peace enforcement --

LITTLEJOHNS: Being enforcement --

MIYET: – peace enforcement –

LITTLEJOHNS: Chapter VII of the Charter.

MIYET: – or almost war, which was the situation of Iraq, we know that it's better to rely on strong military components, full multinational forces, or regional organizations. We know that; it has been the lesson which has been drawn from these experiences, and we take these into account. In other situations, it's clear that it's peace-keeping, most of the time. Here it's on the basis of an agreement, and for consent of the parties. So from the beginning, from the starting point, we know where we are and what we want to achieve. So these are the lessons which have been drawn from these four years in which the UN has been very actively involved in all kinds of peace-keeping.

PENKETH: Could you explain why it takes so long to actually get a UN force up and running, compared to a multinational force which seems to, for example, in Albania, as soon as the UN Security Council gave the green light there, the troops were available very quickly. And this is never the case for a UN force. Why is that?

MIYET: Because we have no UN troops. We are relying on national forces which are put at our disposal. And it's taking into account these lessons that we have tried to improve our capacity to respond very quickly, very rapidly to any kind of situation. And I must say today – and we are planning actively to say that you have time, because the political process seems to be stalled in the Congo – I think that for Congo we are really prepared to react very quickly if there was tomorrow a decision by the Security Council. We have negotiated stand-by arrangements for which countries prepare troops to our disposal if there is a need while retaining the sovereign right to say yes or not to any request coming from the Secretariat. We we know that troops are earmarked and trained in different countries for peace-keeping operations, but we have not the capacity to say to these Governments, you will provide automatically these troops. The decisions will remain in the hands of every Government to say yes or not for this operation or that operation. But, you know, these relationships, these cooperations between the Secretariat, the military institutions in 69 countries, as far as I know, have signed stand-by arrangements for the time being is such that our capacity to react quickly has improved dramatically during the last months.

WILLIAMS: Militarily that's the case, but financially what are your constraints because of the political deadlock in the US Congress, where they've unilaterally reduced the US peace-keeping allocation?

MIYET: Now, this is – for the time being – I went to Washington last week, and I had very positive, fruitful and useful contact with the American administrations at all levels. It's clear that there are discussions with the Congress on how things have to develop. There is no position in which it's no more peace-keeping. I think that the United States remains

committed and interested in peace-keeping operations, because this country knows how much it's important to preserve peace, stability and security. But there is a need to try to discuss, to cooperate and to convince the congressmen about the opportunity, the interest, etc,. And so it's also up to us within the Secretariat to prepare all those things in such a way that we are convincing, and what we bring is something useful for the administration in the discussions with the Congress.

WILLIAMS: Did you meet Jesse Helms, the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee?

MIYET: No, I had no opportunity, I went to meet people within the administration. But it's up to us to convince everyone that we respect full sovereignty from everyone, that we are realistic, and that we can make the difference. For that, we must be realistic, and we will do.

PENKETH: But the Congress, for example, still would have to approve any US soldiers being sent to Congo-Brazzaville. Do you think this is something that Americans would like to see?

MIYET: But there is no need to have American soldiers to organize an operation in Congo-Brazzaville. And as far as I know the Africans themselves would prefer to have largely African troops, at least infantry, on the ground. They have never requested to have troops. And as far as I know, I don't know any big industrial country for the time being willing at the same time to provide troops. But most of them are ready to accept such an operation. So there is a need for –

WILLIAMS: But will the Congress will provide dollars for it?

MIYET: It's a form of dollars, it's not a form of troops.

PENKETH: The bottom line, though, are there any white soldiers likely to be going to Africa any time soon? It doesn't look like it, from what you're saying.

MIYET: No, I don't say that, because for the time being many, many – the Africans would prefer to have mainly African troops, and it's understandable. I say mainly. At the same time, you know that on the logistical – in terms of logistics, communication, transportation, there is a clear need of support coming from developed countries. And several of them are ready to do that. So there will be cooperation, and the cooperation will take different forms in different situations. The Security Council – I know that now the time is not right for that – adopted on the principle the idea of a peace-keeping operation in Sierra Leone. The troops which were earmarked for that were African and Indian troops. No one complained. Everyone agreed on that, with support coming from developed countries. This kind of formula is something which is acceptable. You have not always, I would say, troops coming from the big western or developed countries in all peace-keeping operations. I could

explain to you what is the composition of the troops in all operations, and you would see that in some countries we have only small countries which are big contributing countries, such as Pakistan, such as India, such as Bangladesh, such as Brazil, and even smaller countries which are really committed -- Scandinavian countries – committed to peace-keeping urgent which are pertinant and you do not find any American, British, French soldier in these troops.

LITTLEJOHNS: But the United States is providing logistic support?

MIYET: Not always. We are...

LITTLEJOHNS: I mean, a lot of the troops come in on American planes, don't they?

MIYET: No, no, no, we have the capacity and.... You know, we are running 15 operations in which we transport troops for rotations every month. And we do it without the support of any country, because we have already, for procurement, for contracts with civilian companies, air transportation companies, shipping companies, the capacity to do that. We have experience, we have the expertise, we do that all along the year.

LITTLEJOHNS: The UN surely is constrained by the financial situation now, as far as peace-keeping is concerned. I mean, peace-keeping is more likely to be diminishing than expanding, is it not, over the next few years? Regardless of the situations that you confront?

MIYET: Yes. Here too, as far as the financial situation, peace-keeping operations are less problematic than other operations. Because when the Security Council decides that there will be an operation, the budget is adopted at the same time. So we have, through assessed contributions, the financing for such an operation. This is something which is useful. The real problem now is of a more general nature, which is the budgetary problem, in many countries, and especially in the United States, in which there is much more caution or reluctance to embark on new activities which might be costly. At the same time, and it's why I am pragmatic, I don't know what will be the political landscape in the next months and year. I don't know if there will be requests coming from the countries for more involvement from the UN. This might come up. If we are successful in what we do, if we are ready and able to achieve and to terminate such an operation successfully, there will be new demands on us. What we have to do is to maintain, to preserve the instrument as a responsive instrument able to --

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Miyet, that's all the time we have. Thank you for being with us on this edition of **World Chronicle**.

Our guest has been Bernard Miyet, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. He was interviewed by Ian Williams of the *Tribune* of London and Anne Penketh of AFP.

I'm Michael Littlejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of **World Chronicle**.

* * * * *

Transcripts of the programme may be obtained free of charge by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: **World Chronicle**, United Nations, Room S-827, New York, New York, 10017, USA.

World Chronicle is broadcast worldwide and features guests whose work is concerned with major global issues. This programme is a public affairs presentation of this station from United Nations Radio and Television.

Additional information material about the United Nations can be obtained by writing to the Public Inquiries Unit, United Nations, Room GA-57, New York, New York, 10017, USA, or the UN Information Centre in your country.